Learn Chinese Characters Lesson 1

Introduction and Basic Strokes

Chinese does not have an alphabet but instead has characters(汉字Hànzì). Chinese characters are the records of meanings or objects. They are also separated from the oral language, or the pronunciation.

Chinese characters have more than 3000 years of history and originate from pictograms, so when you study characters you will also learn some interesting Chinese culture. For example: 人 in ancient is writing like this:

The earliest known pictographs of 人 show the figure of a person in profile with head, hands, and legs. Over time this character evolved towards its present form with two strokes that represent the legs, suggesting an insight into man's evolution from anthropoids or even earlier forms of life. Standing distinguished human beings from animals.

Chinese characters can at first appear complex, but with a firm understanding of the basics (strokes and radicals), Chinese writing is clear and concise.

Chinese characters are square-shaped and are made up of strokes (笔画bǐhuà). Here are some basic strokes.

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	笔画 Stokes	笔画名称 Name	写法 Way of writing	例字 Example
1		横 héng Horizontal stroke	horizontally from left to right	yī 一 one
2		竖 shù Vertical stroke	vertically from top to bottom	shí 十 ten
3		撇 piě Vertical stroke	softly from top to lower left	bā 八 eight
4		捺 nà Vertical stroke	softly from top to lower right	rén 人 person,people
5		点 diǎn Vertical stroke	dot from top to bottom right or left	liù 六 six
6		折 zhé Vertical stroke	horizontal stroke with a vertical turn	kǒu 口 mouth

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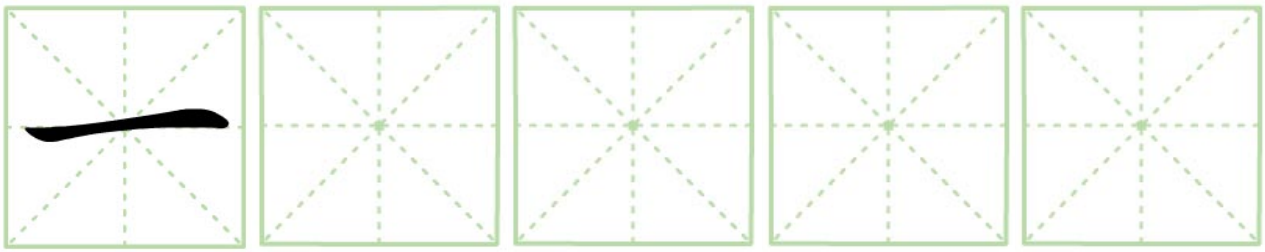
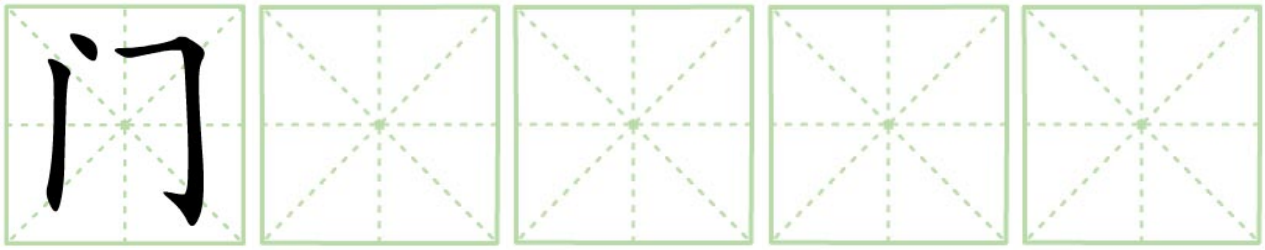
Please use the box paper below when practicing writing the characters. The box paper is designed to help you learn proper spacing and positioning of characters.

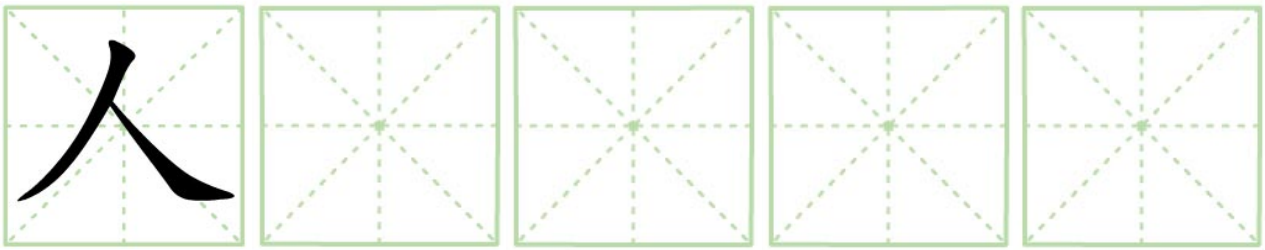
一 yī (one)



门 mén (door)



人 rén (person)



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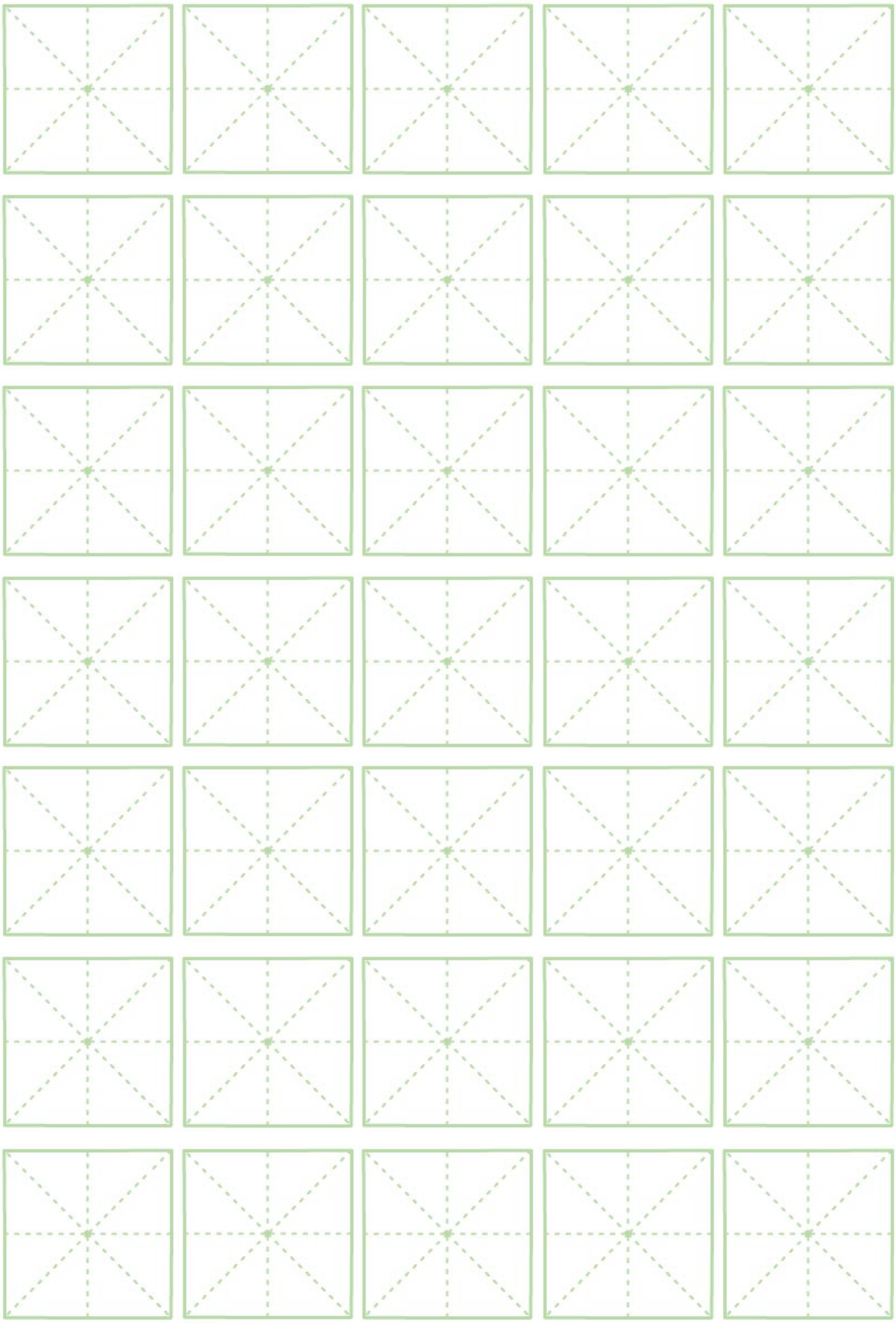

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